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# Parallels

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## IN THE NATION

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20—Looking back over the bloodiest events of the last few years, certain parallels are visible.

*The Straw-Man Strategy.* After ghetto disturbances in Newark and Cleveland, officials reported the presence of "snipers" firing at the police and National Guardsmen. Later, it was found that there were none. After Jackson State, policemen said snipers had fired at them, too; no evidence to substantiate this has been brought forward. At Attica, the first official reports were that prisoners had killed eight hostages by slashing their throats. In fact, all died by gunfire, and the prisoners had no guns.

*Scare Stories.* At the Chicago Convention in 1968, the demonstrators were planning to murder Mayor Daley and others and burn down the Conrad Hilton Hotel. At Kent State, the dead students were drug addicts, diseased and subversives, and the National Guard was in mortal danger. Fred Hampton's group of Black Panthers shot it out with the police in a hail of gunfire. At Attica, one prisoner held a blowtorch to the foot of a hostage, another castrated a hostage, and two hostages were killed two days before the assault. All these scare stories received official circulation, and all were false.

*The Conspiracy.* When the ghetto uprisings began, Congress passed a law against crossing state lines with intent to incite a riot. The Chicago Seven were prosecuted for conspiring to cause the 1968 convention disturbances. "Outside agitators" were cited by some officials for what happened at Kent State, as they always used to be for any civil rights demonstration in the South, and for practically every later ghetto disorder. Cleveland Sellers, an "outside agitator" who was shot by the police during the Orangeburg massacre, was the only person to be convicted and jailed for that brutal pacification program.

*Getting Tough.* Almost across the board, from the ghetto battles, through college upheavals and the Democratic Convention, at Kent State, Orangeburg, and Jackson State, in Augusta and on Mayday in Washington, the authorities have not hesitated to "get tough." When some have tried to restrain the use of force—as in the case of Attorney General Ramsey Clark during the Washington riots following Dr. Martin Luther King's murder—they have been savagely criticized. Yet, those who feel themselves aggrieved in American society are constantly urged to refrain from violence.

*Lawbreaking.* "Getting tough" is always said to be necessary to preserve "law and order." But "getting tough" resulted in wholesale violations of the law, by law officers, in Chicago, at Jackson State, at Orangeburg, at Augusta, at Columbia and Harvard Universities, on Mayday, and in most of the ghetto uprisings. At Attica, hostages apparently died from policemen's bullets, and there are credible reports that the shooting of hostages and prisoners was indiscriminate.

*Frozen Institutions.* The most shocking and spectacular upheavals in recent years have been directed at some of the most rigid institutions in American life—the lockstep education of the four-year university, the caged-animal custodial approach of prisons and "correctional facilities," and the various forces that maintain the black ghetto, such as uncaring police, inept city services, unresponsive banks and other businesses, restrictive unions and exploitative employers.

*Black and White.* With the exceptions of the Chicago convention disturbances and the Kent State shootings, an absolutely crucial factor in all of these bloody events was racial hatred and division.

*Class Contradiction.* In some of these conflicts there has been a curious inversion of class interests. White policemen of low economic and social status did the shooting at Jackson State, and poor blacks did the dying. Blacks, wise in the violent ways of the authorities, stood aside from essentially white demonstrations at Chicago and Kent State. While poor black, white and Puerto Rican prisoners proclaimed their solidarity at Attica, low-income whites prepared to assault them at the orders of Nelson A. Rockefeller.

*Vietnam.* Finally, it is a singular fact that in virtually the same time period, in the bloodiest incident of all, every one of these parallels can be found—the straw man of Asian Communism, the scare story from the Tonkin Gulf, the conspiracy in Peking, getting tough with troops and bombers, lawbreaking at Mylai, the frozen institutions of the cold war and the military establishment, the racial conflict of white and yellow, the class inversion of poor Americans and poor Asians killing each other.

When will we face the truth?